NUMB. CCCLV.

The SPECTATOR.

Non ego mordaci diſtrinxi carmine quenquam,
Nulla venenato littera miſta joco eſt. Ov.

Thurſday, April 17. 1712.

I Have been very often tempted to write Invectives upon thoſe who have detracted from my Works, or ſpoken in derogation of my Perſon; but I look upon it as a particular Happineſs that I have always hinder'd my Reſentments from proceeding to this Extremity. I once had gone through half a Satyr, but found ſo many Motions of Humanity riſing in me towards the Perſons whom I had ſeverely treated, that I threw it into the Fire without ever finiſhing it. I have been angry enough to make ſeveral little Epigrams and Lampoons, and after having admired them a Day or two, have likewiſe committed them to the Flames. Theſe I look upon as ſo many Sacrifices to Humanity, and have received much greater Satisfaction from the ſuppreſſing ſuch Performances, than I could have done from any Reparation they might have procured me, or from any Mortification they might have given my Enemies, in caſe I had made them publick. If a Man has any Talent in Writing, it ſhews a good Mind to forbear returning Calumnies and Reproaches in the ſame Spirit of Bitterneſs with which they are offered: But when a Man has been at ſome pains in making ſuitable returns to an Enemy, and has the Inſtruments of Revenge in his Hands, to let drop his Wrath, and ſtifle his Reſentments, ſeems to have ſomething in it Great and Heroical. There is a particular Merit in ſuch a way of forgiving an Enemy, and the more violent and unprovoked the Offence has been, the greater ſtill is the Merit of him who thus forgives it.

I never met with a Conſideration that is more finely ſpun, and what has better pleaſed me, than one in *Epictetus*, which places an Enemy in a new Light, and gives us a view of him altogether different from that in which we are uſed to regard him. The Senſe of it is as follows: Does a Man reproach thee for being Proud or Ill-natured; Envious or Conceited; Ignorant or Detracting? conſider with thy ſelf whether his Reproaches are true, if they are not, conſider that thou art not the Perſon whom he reproaches, but that he reviles an Imaginary Being, and perhaps loves what thou really art, tho' he hates what thou appeareſt to be. If his Reproaches are true, if thou art the envious ill-natured Man he takes thee for, give thy ſelf another turn, become mild, affable and obliging, and his Reproaches of thee naturally ceaſe: his Reproaches may indeed continue, but thou art not the Perſon whom he reproaches.

I often apply this Rule to my ſelf, and, when I hear of a Satyrical Speech or Writing that is aimed at me, I examine my own Heart, whether I deſerve it or not. If I bring in a Verdict againſt my ſelf, I endeavour to rectifie my Conduct for the future in thoſe Particulars, which have drawn the Cenſure upon me; but if the whole Invective be grounded upon a Falſhood, I trouble my ſelf no further about it, and look upon my Name at the Head of it, to ſignifie no more than one of thoſe fictitious Names made uſe of by an Author to introduce an Imaginary Character. Why ſhould a Man be ſenſible of the Sting of a Reproach, who is a Stranger to the Guilt that is implied in it? or ſubject himſelf to the Penalty, when he knows he has never committed the Crime? This is a Piece of Fortitude, which every one owes to his own Innocence, and without which it is impoſſible for a Man of any Merit or Figure to live at peace with himſelf in a Country that abounds with Wit and Liberty.

The Famous Monſieur *Balzac*, in a Letter to the Chancellour of *France*, who had prevented the Publication of a Book againſt him, has the following Words, which are a lively Picture of the Greatneſs of Mind ſo viſible in the Works of that Author. *If it was a new thing, it may be I ſhould not be diſpleaſed with the Suppreſſion of the firſt Libel that ſhould abuſe me, but ſince there are enough of 'em to make a ſmall Library, I am ſecretly pleaſed to ſee the number encreaſed, and take Delight in raiſing a Heap of Stones, that Envy has caſt at me without doing me any harm.*

The Author here alludes to thoſe Monuments of the Eaſtern Nations, which were Mountains of Stones raiſed upon the dead Body by Travellers, that uſed to caſt every one his Stone upon it as they paſſed by it. It is certain that no Monument is ſo glorious as one which is thus raiſed by the Hands of Envy. For my part, I admire an Author for ſuch a Temper of Mind, as enables him to bear an undeſerved Reproach without Reſentment, more than for all the Wit of any the fineſt Satirical Reply.

Thus

Thus far I thought neceſſary to explain my ſelf in relation to thoſe who have animadverted on this Paper, and to ſhew the Reaſons why I have not thought fit to return them any formal Anſwer. I muſt further add, that the Work wou'd have been of very little uſe to the Publick, had it been filled with Perſonal Reflections and Debates, for which reaſon I have never once turned out of my way to obſerve thoſe little Cavils which have been made againſt it by Envy or Ignorance. The common fry of Scribblers who have no other way of being taken notice of, but by attacking what has gained ſome Reputation in the World, wou'd have furniſhed me with Buſineſs enough, had they found me diſpoſed to enter the Liſts with 'em.

I ſhall conclude with the Fable of *Boccalini*'s Traveller, who was ſo peſtered with the Noiſe of Graſhoppers in his Ears that he alighted from his Horſe in great Wrath to kill them all. This, ſays the Author, was troubling himſelf to no manner of purpoſe: Had he purſued his Journey without taking notice of them, the troubleſome Inſects would have died of themſelves in a very few Weeks, and he would have ſuffered nothing from them.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

☞ Whereas about nine Weeks ſince there was accidentally diſcovered by an Husbandman at Stimsfield near Woodſtock in Oxfordſhire, (a large Pavement of rich and curious Work of the Ancient Romans, which is adorn'd with ſeveral Figures alluding to Mirth and Concord, in particular that of Bacchus ſeated on a Panther.) This is to give Notice, that an exact Delineation of the ſame is Engraven and Imprinted on a large Elephant Sheet of Paper; which are to be Sold at Mr. Charles Lillie's, Perfumer, at the corner of Beauford Buildings in the Strand, at 1 s. N. B. There are to be had at the ſame place at one Guinea each on a ſuperfine Atlas Paper, ſome painted with the ſame variety of Colours that the ſaid Pavement is beautified with; this Piece of Antiquity is eſteemed by the Learned to be the moſt conſiderable ever found in Britain.

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Juſt Publiſhed,

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Whereas Captain Gilbert Lacy, Linnen-Draper at the Golden Anchor in Henrietta-ſtreet Covent Garden, is leaving off his buſineſs, this is to give Notice that he will diſpoſe of his Goods at a very reaſonable Rate.

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